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ABSTRACT

The influence process for teachers and coaches involves relations with administrators, peers, significant others who may be outside the direct control of the leader, and situational conflicts. Effective leadership requires a knowledge of the processes involved, but existing literature does not cite a single generally acceptable theory of leadership. A history of the literature shows a definite development of ideas from the original notions of leaders having specific and identifiable traits to approaches asserting that aspects of situations determine the effectiveness of leaders and the organizations which they lead, to interactionist's views emphasizing the need to consider both situation and leader. The leadership-influence process, when viewed in an organizational context, is much broader in scope than simple goal accomplishment, and a model of leadership must describe the potential conflicts in which leaders may find themselves. This requires a focus on the leader's unique position within the organization. (DS)

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AN ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP IN TEACHING/COACHING

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INTRODUCTION

An approach to the study of teacher and coach behavior that focuses directly on the requirements of leadership is long overdue. In many ways these persons face a unique set of leadership problems. As with others who anticipate entry into formal and highly structured organizations, they must learn those special aspects of the leadership process that surface when leadership begins by appointment rather than by group choice. In addition, however, teachers and coaches face a leadership situation where the division of subordinate loyalties between the organization and outside individuals and agencies can impact heavily on organizational effectiveness and where the complex interface with society strongly influences the manner in which leadership is exercised. Because this unique combination of problems is not covered adequately by any single approach to leadership, teachers and coaches are forced into a hit-or-miss review of existing literature that often leaves them with more questions than answers.

It is the purpose of this paper to set the stage for the study of leadership in such a way as to help meet the need cited above. To accomplish this, first of all a brief historical examination of the major approaches to the study of leadership will be presented. Upon this foundation will be based a functional definition of leadership with emphasis on its organizational context. Finally, a model of organizational leadership will be presented. The purpose of this model is to act as a conceptual guide to study the subject of leadership.

Prior to beginning this historical perspective, however, it is important to note that the study of leadership has developed considerably over the past few years. Not quite two decades ago, Browne and Cohn (1958) felt compelled to conclude that although mankind had long recognized the significance of leadership as an essential aspect of human activity and that great masses of literature had been assembled, leadership literature could be classified as "a mass of content without any coagulating substance to bring it together or to produce coordination and point out interrelations."

In the time since this rather discouraging conclusion, the scientific process has led to much refinement of theory and has caused the body of knowledge about the leadership process to take many giant strides forward. Unfortunately, we have not yet reached the point where we can cite a single, generally acceptable "theory of leadership." Nor are we likely to be able to do so in the near future. Nevertheless, we are at a point of academic sophistication where certain concepts and theories of leadership taken together are beginning to bear fruit in terms of understanding and usefulness to the practitioner.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TO THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

A question which often is asked: "How can we best understand the leadership process and thereby make better leaders of ourselves and others?" Not long ago by historical standards, this question would have been considered quite presumptuous. It was reasoned at that time that if leadership had not been predisposed by deity or by blood line, there was no need for one to concern himself with such thoughts. This approach, spawned by the traditional view of society and perpetuated by the fuedal system, found its way into government, the military, the economics of family business, and most other aspects of human social existence. Even after these conclusions began to be questioned and people began to aspire to positions of leadership by their own talents, the study of leadership through analyzing the lives and actions of historically great leaders persisted. One need only look at the earliest photographs and paintings of aspiring leaders to note the resemblance in gesture, posture and decorum to the heroes of an earlier day.

As late as 1841, Carlyle formally proposed the theory that "great men" with dynamic and charismatic qualities shaped the events of history. This thesis was accepted for many years in lay circles and had a strong impact on the initial academic

study of leadership. Some systematic observation of leaders, mixed with a great deal of intuitive feeling on the part of lay persons and practitioners in the field of leadership generated lists of characteristics, special talents, traits and interpersonal skills which seemed to characterize a person as a "leader." After the fashion of the earlier "great man" theory, it was felt that if such characteristics could be clearly isolated, adopted and practiced, individuals could be developed into leaders in multiple, if not all situations. This trait approach to the study of leadership dominated the literature during the early formal study of leadership.

The events of World War II were instrumental in bringing the trait approach into academic focus. Several attempts were made to determine the validity of such an approach to the study of leadership. Stogdill (1948) for instance, conducted an exhaustive review of the academic literature from the turn of the century to that date in an effort to determine if there was any substance to the trait approach. His review almost put an end to the serious study of trait theory when he was forced to conclude that there was no evidence of a single trait or characteristic that identified a person as a leader. Furthermore, he could find no constellation of traits which could be used to describe the leader in all situations. Many possible explanations were proposed for this finding. Personality theorists, for example, continue to point out that we do not yet have adequate measures of leadership and personality traits. However, by far the most accepted explanation for the failure to identify universal traits is simply that there are no such traits.

One problem with the trait approach stems from the way in which it came into being. It is easy for persons to recall leaders they have known who do have specific traits. It is just as easy to recall non-leaders who do not. However, these same persons tend to ignore or make excuses for the leaders they have known who seem to lack some or most of the "leadership traits" as well as for the non-

leaders who appear to possess many of the same traits.

In a more recent effort, Stogdill (1974) reviewed an additional 163 studies of leadership characteristics. He analyzed studies that differentiated leaders from followers, effective leaders from ineffective leaders, and higher-echelon from lower-echelon leaders. He concluded the following:

> The leader is characterized by a strong desire for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem solving, drive to exercise initiative in social situations, self-confidence and a sense of personal identity, willingness to accept consequences for decision and action, readiness to absorb interpersonal stress, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other persons' behavior, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.

Stogdill is careful to point out, however, that this new "list" does not constitute a return to the trait approach. He merely sees it as a "sensible moderation of the extreme situationist point of view" - - a view which tends to ignore the impact of the leader altogether. He also notes, however, the apparent absence in the literature of trait studies with negative results. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the trait approach, no longer a serious avenue of study among leadership theorists, would not be of sufficient interest among theorists to generate any serious effort to dispute its existence.

The major problem with the trait approach, however, is not the existence or absence of lists of admirable traits, but rather the answer to the question: "What can be done with them even if they could be verified?" As Fiedler (1967)

points out, it takes several years of intensive psychotherapy to change the personality (traits) of a person. If this is true, how can a knowledge about traits alone be useful to us in developing effective leaders? Certainly, the drill of memorizing lists of traits does not appear to produce more effective leaders.

It would probably be an improved society if all people could acquire the traits usually attributed to the leader. However, to attempt to study leadership and, further, to develop leadership ability through the study of traits is perhaps not very fruitful at our present level of understanding.

As an historical counterpoint to Carlyle, in the late 1800's, Marx and Engles proposed that it is not dynamic and charismatic persons who turn the course of history, rather it is history which thrusts certain people into power. Max Weber (1947) proposed in the early 1900's an impersonal, bureaucratic type of leadership - not leadership by attribute, characteristic or loyalty to a particular leader, but leadership by legal authority based on established rule. The implication of this philosophy for the study of leadership is that leaders may be viewed as changeable parts within the organizational structure without regard to personal characteristics (except necessary expertise). Such a philosophy is perhaps the historical forerunner of the situationist approach to the study of leadership. In essence, this approach asserts that aspects of the situation determine the effectiveness of leaders and the organizations which they lead.

There does appear in the literature considerable evidence to support the hypothesis that groups tend not only to accept, but demand leaders who exhibit abilities and characteristics that lend themselves to the accomplishment of group purposes and goals (Korten, 1962; Stogdill, 1974). Further, it is generally

known that given the opportunity, groups will discard leaders who do not fulfill their expectations (Hamblin, 1958). However, more contemporary situationists are presently looking at such unique aspects of the situation as leadership climate (House of Rizzo, 1972), communications processes (Leavitt, 1951), situational uncertainty and ambiguity (Lawrence and Lorch, 1969), conflict and control (Taylor and Bowers, 1970), and social exchange (Jacobs, 1971). Like trait theory, the purely situationist approach has not produced a generally accepted theory of leadership. One must conclude, however, that situational factors must be taken into consideration in the study of the leadership process.

Notwithstanding the apparent demise of trait theory, there are currently those in the academic field who concern themselves with the observation probably best expressed by Fiedler (1963): "And yet, we know of men who consistently manage to build up ineffective groups and sick organizations, while there are others "who could not lead a troop of hungry girl scouts to a hamburger stand". . . . Unless we close our eyes to these cases, we are forced to the conclusion - long held by laymen - that there must be some abilities or personal attributes which distinguish good leaders from bad ones".

These theorists conclude that perhaps it is not sufficient to consider either the leader or the situation in isolation - that only by taking into consideration the interaction between the two can we really understand the true nature of leader affectiveness. In summary, their argument is as follows: If we can identify leaders who are effective in all situations then we must seriously consider the trait approach to leadership. However, this has clearly not been the case. On the other hand, if any person can be an effective leader in a given situation, then we must consider the situationist approach more seriously. This has also received little support. Therefore, they conclude, it is more reasonable to assert that some leaders are effective in some situations and less so in others.

This interactionist view of the leadership process is the most current (and perhaps most productive) approach to the study of leadership - one which presently has the attention of several major theorists in the leadership area (Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler and Chemers, 1974; Kerr, Schresheim, Murphy and Stogdill, 1974; Evans, 1970; House, 1971).

LEADERSHIP DEFINED

Much confusion in the study of leadership is generated by the multiplicity of definitions. Stogdill (1974) is his massive review of the leadership literature devotes ten pages to categorizing the various definitions of leadership. Among others he includes categories which focus on the group process, the personality or behavior of the leader, the exercise of influence and power, the attainment of group goals, the differentiation of roles, and the effects of interaction. Because each definition is defensible when viewed in the context in which its author presents it, it is difficult to justify a preference for a certain definition. Conversely, to present a definition of leadership that will satisfy all those who study the subject of leadership is equally as presumptuous.

However, when considering the unique purpose of this paper - the presentation of an approach for studying leadership in an organizational context - it appears that the category most adequately conveying this purpose is that of considering leadership as an influence process. As Stogdill (1974) points out, influence implies a reciprocal relationship between the leader and his followers, e.g., teacher/student coach/player. At the same time, however, it also leaves room for influence of significant others with whom the leader must concern himself, e.g., peers and administrators. Such influence processes are essential to the functioning of leadership within organizations.

In its simplest form, leadership may be defined as the process of influencing human behavior. However, this simplistic definition does not appear to be sufficient to express the true function of the leader within an organizational context.

Organizations, in their most basic sense are goal-oriented and purposeful. It would seem, therefore, that in an organizational context an appropriate definition might be: the process of influencing human behavior so as to accomplish the goals of the organization. From our point of view, however, this puts the leader in the position of merely transmitting goals and ensuring fulfillment of the desires of administrators (representing the organization). Although such a definition may be adequate, it is felt that in education, the relegation of the leader at any level to a function of goal transmission and accomplishment may not be totally appropriate. Consequently, we would prefer to include the element of ultimate responsibility as an integral part of the definition. Accordingly, we shall define leadership as:

> (The process of influencing human behavior so as to accomplish the goals prescribed by the leader.)

Certain students will accomplish the goals of the organization without influence. In this case, no leadership is required. However, when individuals will not on their own accomplish tasks, it becomes a function of the teacher/coach to influence them in such a way so as to achieve goal accomplishment. If the leader is successful, he is said to be an efficient leader; if not, then he is ineffective.

The reader is cautioned that other terms used in education/coaching sometines become interchangeable with leadership. Management, administration, headship may be such terms. We frequently find them used indiscriminantly in conversations concerning leadership. A distinction between the terms is provided by Bons (1974).

> "The business of influencing men to accomplish a goal almost invariably involves the application of a wide range of skills, and that certainly includes the managerial skills - planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and controlling resources of all kinds.

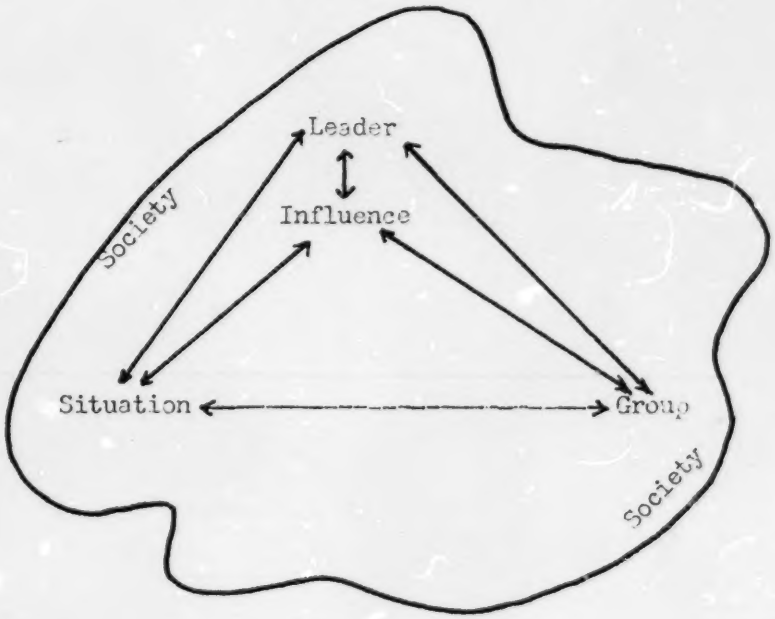
> It generally requires the use of authority and an acceptance of responsibility. It seems to me that to discuss leadership as if the ability to influence was derived entirely from good interpersonal communications or empathy or an understanding of human organizational behavior is deceptive. An effective leader must be an effective manager and in educational situations he must deal with a fact that he is an organizationally imposed leader, a person with authority and direction externally derived."

A working definition is critical to the development of any model of leadership. It is felt that the definition described herein can now permit us to move on to the development of an organizational approach to the study of leadership.

A MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

To guide us in the study of leadership it is sometimes helpful to visualize relationships by means of a diagram or model. Such a model should adequately describe the essential elements and relationships peculiar to the particular context in which the leadership process is taking place. The organization is by no means unique in its structure. It involves such familiar aspects of a hierarchial relationship as lines-of-responsibility, span-of-control for leaders, homogeneity of tasks within subgroups, and the delegation of authority. Furthermore, communications (both formal and informal) travel up, down and laterally across the organization. To attempt to include all of these organizational elements, however, would generate a model of extreme complexity. As with any model, therefore, its builders must make a determination of which

attributes of the real-world situation they want to include and which they choose to ignore for the sake of clarity and understanding. A model of a ship, for instance, may not need to float in order to describe the real ship in the way the model builder would like us to see it. And, even if it does float, the propulsion system would probably not be identical to that of the real ship. The inconsistencies could go on and on. Perhaps the best criterion for a model's usefulness is not its completeness, but the extent to which the authors and the reader can jointly "hang" all parts of the real world on it - a goodness of fit, so to speak. The Model of Organizational Leadership shown is designed to do just that.



A MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

In summary, the study of leadership has progressed considerably since the day when would-be leaders would mimic the gestures, speech and decorum of historically great leaders in order to portray their own leadership potential. Although to some degree this activity still persists among lay-leaders, the academic study of leadership is better served by understanding that a knowledge of the capabilities and peculiarities of the leader within a given situational context is perhaps more beneficial. The processes of influencing human behavior so as to accomplish the goals of the leader become complex when viewed in an organizational context. The influence process is much broader in scope than the mere transference of goals from higher to lower groups and the assurance that such goals are performed properly. The influence process involves relations with administrator, peers and significant others who may be outside the direct control of the leader.

The model of leadership presented herein describes the potential conflicts in which leaders may find themselves. By focusing on the leader's unique position within the organization, we can better understand those elements of the organizational environment which have potential impact on his or her attempts to influence human behavior.

Throughout this discussion it should be understood that the leader is also an individual. Accordingly, the leader, too, is subject to environment constraints, cultural and societal heritages and the impact of those around him. That is, the leader is not merely a "stimulator" - he is also being "stimulated."

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